DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 404 095 RC 020 937

TITLE	Standards and Assessment. IDRA Focus.
INSTITUTION	Intercultural Development Research Association, San Antonio, Tex.
REPORT NO	ISSN-1069-5672
PUB DATE	Feb 97
NOTE	17p.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	IDRA Newsletter; v24 n2 Feb 1997
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Admission Criteria; Advisory Committees; Affirmative Action; Bilingual Education; *College Admission; Educational Legislation; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Limited English Speaking; Minority Groups; State Curriculum Guides; State Legislation; *State Standards; *Student Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS	Diversity (Student); *Texas; Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills; *Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

ABSTRACT

This newsletter includes three articles, two of which focus on standards for student evaluation and for admission to higher education. "A Measuring Stick for Standards and TEKS: Meeting the Needs of Second Language Learners" (Laura Chris Green, Adela Solis) examines beliefs embodied in the notion of standards; defines content, performance, and opportunity-to-learn standards; discusses development of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), new curriculum and instructional guidelines; and calls for modifications to TEKS to meet the needs of students learning English as a second language. "Criteria for Diversity: THECB's Advisory Committee Suggests New Criteria" (Albert Cortez) discusses Hopwood vs. the State of Texas, which challenged use of racial and ethnic factors in college admissions and financial decisions; examines possible criteria promoting student diversity in college admissions; and lists recommendations for legislation and institutional practices from an advisory committee of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). In an unrelated article, "Equity and Excellence: Current Issues in the 75th Texas Legislative Session" (Albert Cortez, Anna Alicia Romero) examines state educational policy issues: school finance equity, property taxes, public funding for private schools, language policy and bilingual education, access to public education for immigrant students, minority access to higher education, alternative educational placements for disruptive students, and school accountability. Also included is "The Analogy of the Amoeba" (Jose A. Cardenas), commentary on the need to adapt instructional programs to student needs and characteristics. Contains references. (SV)

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INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

IDRA Newsletter

IDRA Focus:
Standards and Assessment

ISSN 1069-5672 Volume XXIV, No. 2 February 1997

ED 404 095

A Measuring Stick for Standards and TEKS: Meeting the Needs of Second Language Learners

Laura Chris Green, Ph.D. and Adela Solis, Ph.D.

Inside this Issue:

◇ Diversity criteria in higher education

◇ Community leadership and standards

◇ Issues in the Texas legislature

◇ Analogy of the amoeba

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

Educational reform initiatives in the 1990s have focused on students' knowledge and skills since the profile of student achievement in the nation sadly has shown us that students are not prepared for real-world challenges. Whether college-bound or job-bound, young people are struggling as they confront demands for even the most basic reading, writing and thinking skills.

Results of large-scale assessments at the national and state levels confirm this trend. Academic discipline experts, too, can point out widespread limitations in mastery of disciplines, whether pertaining to math, geography or literature. The implications are that our young citizens cannot get ahead careerwise or compete in the global economy. This has stimulated educational reform initiatives that focus on the development of "standards" for students.

We often hear phrases mentioned such as "world-class standards," "challenging content" and "high-level skills," which hints that schools have not clearly identified, or have forgotten to specify, in their curricula what the students should know and master to become successful adults (see U.S. Department of Education, 1995). This perception opposes the previous view that a focus on outcomes, usually in the form of test results, was all that was needed to stimulate and obtain desired educational results.

The most visible national standards today are the national education goals that were established in 1990 by a group comprised of state governors and former President Bush. The standards were further promoted by Congress in 1994 through the legislation, *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*. Other national standards are those developed by professional organizations for the different core school subjects (see *Education Week*, 1993).

Both the national goals and the core subject standards exist to guide state and local initiatives in setting their own standards. Although not mandatory, existing national standards have influenced much activity at the state and local levels to a large extent because the federal government advocates the idea and supports it financially.

Through the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*, for example, the Department of Education provides financial resources for states and school districts to use in developing or improving local standards. Additionally, the *Improving America's Schools Act of 1994* (the successor to the *Elementary and Secondary Schools Act*), which funds Title I, Title VII, migrant and other programs for disadvantaged children, now holds schools accountable for the federal dollars they spend through their own local standards. Specifically, the federal government requests that states define "educational progress" for accountability using curricular goals and assessments tailored to their student populations. In doing so, the government assumes that state standards exist. In cases where they do not, states are strongly encouraged to use federal support (through the national goals legislation and other sources) to establish them.

Impetus for standards also comes from national assessment initiatives (also supported by professional organizations) that promote performance-based

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The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity. The *IDRA Newsletter* (ISSN 1069-5672, copyright ©1997) serves as a vehicle for communication with educators, school board members, decision-makers, parents, and the general public concerning the educational needs of all children in Texas and across the United States.

Publication offices:
5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350
San Antonio, Texas 78228-1190
210/684-8180; Fax 210/684-5389
IDRA World Wide Web site:
http://www.idra.org
IDRA E-mail Address:
idra@idra.org

Maria Robledo Montecel, Ph.D.
IDRA Executive Director
Newsletter Executive Editor

Christie L. Goodman, APR
IDRA Communications Manager
Newsletter Production Editor

Sarah H. Aleman
IDRA Data Entry Clerk
Newsletter Typesetter

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A Measuring Stick *- continued from page 1*

assessments. Advocates of performance-based assessments concur that schools must have clearly defined and specified knowledge and skills indicators.

But what are standards, exactly? Educators may be in agreement that there is a need to identify what students need to know and be able to do by developing standards, but many do not know what the concept really means or what the process entails. It is not that straightforward, even to the reformers themselves.

In Texas we are in the process of establishing new standards called the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS pronounced with a short *e*). The TEKS are Texas' effort to spell out what students in the state should know and be able to do. Although it has been referred to officially as a "clarifying" process, the TEKS developers have been influenced, as have many other educators, by the factors and trends mentioned above. Thus, they actually have been involved in new thinking and rewriting. Currently, there are TEKS draft documents being circulated for review and feedback.

There are at least two things to consider in reviewing or implementing Texas standards: (1) the definition of standards and (2) equity issues associated with their development and use.

The Definition of Standards

Standards refers to clear goals and objectives that are tied to the curricula that schools employ to teach students. On the surface, this idea seems trivial because schools have textbooks and other curricular materials for students and teachers to use in the classroom. Many schools also have curriculum guides and teacher staff development that are meant to guide them. However, observations of teachers and classrooms indicate strongly that there is no consensus on the "what" and "how" of teaching.

One group of reformers summarizes the problem like this:

> American education today lacks a coherent system to determine what children should learn, what levels of proficiency they should achieve, how staff should be trained and how governance should be restructured to meet these goals. Without a clear systemic vision, it is impossible to plan, implement or evaluate reforms so that our present efforts can become part of a continuous fabric of schools and system improvement activities (Stanford Working Group, 1993).

Embodied in the idea of standards are two other important beliefs: (1) standards are high level performance targets and (2) teachers have high expectations that all students can achieve the standards.

There are different conceptualizations of standards. Most prominent are *content* standards. These describe what students should know and be able to do (e.g., the student can use estimation to check the reasonableness of results). A *curriculum* standard identifies an instructional device or technique that can appropriately help shape the student's learning (e.g., the student describes, models, draws or classifies shapes).

A *performance* standard identifies the tasks in which the student demonstrates knowledge and skill (the performance standard presumes that the knowledge or skill is defined if it is embedded in a task). The performance standard for a piece of knowledge would specify the level of accuracy and the facts, concepts and generalizations that a student must understand to be judged as successful at a certain level of achievement (e.g., consistently [or 90 percent of the time] models numbers using number lines). The performance standard would also put that knowledge in a specific context by stating a form for presenting the information (e.g., through an essay, an oral report, a graph, the student will...).

Issues related to content and performance standards that should be reconciled by states and school districts have to do with the level of specificity of each standard, the number of standards there should be and the number of benchmarks (the developmental levels that students move through within each standard) there should be (Marzano and Kendall, 1995; O'Neil, 1995).

Opportunity to learn standards identify the learning environment and how it is organized so that students have real opportunities to learn (e.g., materials that can be used, personnel who can assist). Opportunity to learn standards speak specifically to students with special needs and thus are related to the issue of equity (see Wolk, 1992; Schnaiberg, 1994).

Equity in Developing and Using Standards

As indicated above, the thrust of the standards movement is to stimulate high

A Measuring Stick *- continued on page 12*

Criteria for Diversity: THECB's Advisory Committee Suggests New Criteria

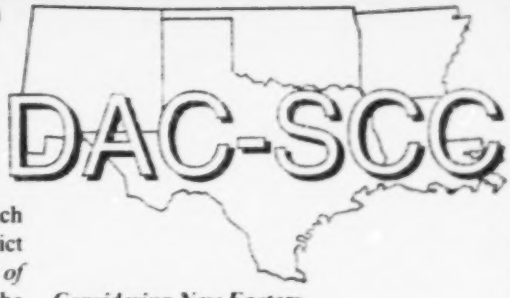
Albert Cortez, Ph.D.

Achieving greater diversity within the student enrollment at colleges and universities has been a long-standing goal in many states. One strategy employed by many institutions has included the use of racial and ethnic factors in admissions and financial decisions. In March of 1994 the use of such criteria was challenged in a federal district court in Texas in *Hopwood vs. The State of Texas*. While the district court upheld the use of such criteria, its decision was overturned by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. The appeals court ruled that, in the way it was being done at the University of Texas' law school at the time of the original suit, consideration of race or ethnicity resulted in unlawful discrimination against White applicants.

The *Hopwood* case highlights issues of access to educational opportunity and of what may be considered for college and university admission. Traditionally, most institutions of higher education have placed heavy emphasis on college entrance examination scores such as the SAT or the ACT. They have supplemented these criteria with such things as rank in graduating class, extracurricular participation, letters of recommendation, essays and personal goals statements.

Despite attempts to diversify the bases for admission and financial aid decisions, college admission data reflect that minorities and low-income students continue to be disproportionally excluded from most institutions of higher education (with a few notable exceptions).

The commissioner of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) formed a special advisory committee to develop guidelines that could be used by colleges, universities and the coordinating board in admission, financial aid and other decisions on campuses in Texas to achieve diversity among student bodies and to ensure adequate representation of minorities and other groups "to be certain that our work force, professional practitioners and general population are prepared for the future and are representative of our state as a whole," (THECB, 1997). The following provides a summary of that committee's report released on January 16, 1997.



Considering New Factors

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's advisory committee on criteria for diversity recognized the importance of considering both quantitative and qualitative information. According to its report, several issues related to race and ethnicity should be considered:

> The racial ethnic history of Blacks and Hispanics, their socio-cultural and economic reality, the quality of public school education most minorities have received, campus [college or university] readiness for their incorporation and the reception that many minorities have experienced in colleges or universities are all important considerations in racial ethnic minorities' preparation for entry and success in higher education (THECB, 1997).

The committee report later notes that factors such as financial aid, standardized tests, limited and/or underfunded academic and support services "have presented formidable barriers with disastrous results for many cultural minorities seeking access to post-secondary educational institutions in Texas" (THECB, 1997).

***Criteria for Diversity** - continued on page 4*

Possible Criteria for Diversity in Higher Education Admissions

Original Criteria	Revised Criteria Based on Data Availability
1. Socio-economic status	1. Socio-economic status, including household income and parents' level of education
2. First generation college status defined as (a) parents are not high school graduates or (b) parents are high school graduates	2. First generation college status
3. Bilingual proficiency	3. Bilingual proficiency
4. Attended financially poor [low property wealth] school district	4. Financial status of students' school district
5. Attended "low performing" school	5. Performance of students' school as indicated by criteria used by the Texas Education Agency
6. Middle or high school home responsibilities	6. Students' responsibilities including working, raising a child and similar factors
7. Leadership experiences	7. Region of residence within Texas
8. High school employment experience	8. Residence within rural, urban, central city, and suburban areas of Texas
9. Region in state	9. Effects of alternative use of ACT and SAT scores
10. Lives in central or inner-city poverty area	10. Students' ACT and SAT rankings within socio-economic levels
11. Lives in rural poverty area	
12. Percentile rank within income categories	
13. Single parent family	
14. Non-traditional student, including older age	
15. Standardized test scores	

Advisory Committee on Criteria for Diversity, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 1997

Analysis of Criteria for Diversity in Higher Education Admissions

Criteria	Total Eligible	Number Minority Out of Total Eligible	Percent of Total Eligible Who are Minority
At or below poverty level for family of four ($12,675)	1,555,690	1,035,195	66.5 %
At or below 200 percent of poverty level for family of four ($23,350)	3,133,779	1,951,761	62.3%
Parents have less than high school education	1,198,070	1,010,158	84.3%
Parents are high school graduates	1,246,131	655,498	52.3%
Parents are not college graduates	4,011,918	2,276,074	56.7%
Language other than English spoken at home	1,511,406	1,397,986	92.5%
Low property wealth district (under $70,000 of taxable property per student)	1,510,388	947,057	62.7%
Student responsibilities:			
Student is a single parent	2,489	1,903	76.5%
Student is a pregnant teen	1,666	1,183	71.0%
Student is in work-study program	2,340	643	27.5%
Region and urban status; South Texas and Upper Rio Grande Valley	1,582,403	1,175,610	74.3%
Region and urban status; central city	4,619,198	2,477,121	53.6%
ACT test scores (below 820)	17,091	9,799	63.2%
SAT test scores (below 820)	16,969	11,584	68.3%
Top performing students within income levels (less than $30,000)	5,072	2,108	42.1%
Top performing students within income levels (more than $100,000)	3,940	669	17.1%

Advisory Committee on Criteria for Diversity, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 1997

***Criteria for Diversity** - continued from page 3*

Also, according to the report, the committee's members originally explored the feasibility of using up to 15 distinct criteria to make decisions relating to admission and financial aid for students seeking admission to colleges in the Texas university system. The original list included the 15 variables listed within the left column in the box on page 3. Once the major variables were identified, the group researched the availability of data bases that could be used for analysis to project impact. Based on data availability, the initial list was reduced to the 10 factors listed in the right-hand column of the box on page 3.

The committee calculated the number and percentage of all students and minority students who would be eligible for college admission if that criteria were used as the sole basis for the admission decision. The findings of these various analyses are summarized in the table above.

The table shows that use of four of the factors would result in the highest number of students (from the total population) 25 years old and under who would be considered eligible for college admission. These factors are: (a) having parents with less than a college degree, (b) being at or below 200 percent of the poverty level for a family of four, (c) living and having to attend a school in a property-poor school district and (d) living in a central city or rural low-income area.

The factors found to yield the largest proportion of minorities within categories differed slightly. The factors that would result in the highest number of eligible minority students are: (a) living in a home where a language other than English is spoken, (b) living in a family below the poverty level, (c) having parents who did not graduate from college and (d) residing in South Texas or the Upper Rio Grande Valley.

In addition, the committee examined combinations of factors that would yield the largest number of underserved populations in Texas. Committee members noted that, within the limitations of available data and the analyses that were conducted, several combinations of factors merit further consideration. These promising combinations include:

- socio-economic conditions related to poverty, income and educational level of parents; and
- single parent status, living in a home where a language other than English is spoken, and having parents who did not graduate from college.

Other factors found to be "useful in identifying populations in need" include:

- residence in Texas' central cities and/or selected regions, including South Texas and Upper Rio Grande Valley; and
- school enrollment in low property wealth school districts and/or districts with concentrations of low-income students and students eligible for free and reduced lunch programs.

Another recommendation related to the admission and financial aid practices that would support increasing diversity was to decrease the emphasis or weight given to SAT and ACT scores.

The committee was careful to note that no single factor could ensure levels of minority access comparable to the levels that were being achieved by using racial and ethnic background as a factor before the *Hopwood* appeal decision. Given this critical finding, the committee stated that the use of multiple criteria for the combining or totaling of several factors to yield an eligibility score (or rating) merits consideration. They noted that a combination using poverty level income and parents' level of education would result in a large number of eligible students

***Criteria for Diversity** - continued on page 15*

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THECB Advisory Committee's Recommendations for Diversity in Admission and Financial Aid

Recommendations for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Require use of parent income levels (200 percent of poverty level), parents' educational level and property wealth of students' school district in admission and financial aid decisions.

Propose that SAT exams be used for student counseling, but not used for admission decisions.

Formalize agreements with SAT and ACT administrators to facilitate tracking of students' college application processes.

Allow use of parent income as a factor for awarding all institutional discretionary financial aid and specify that such discretionary money will be allocated through a needs-based program that attempts to meet the largest percentage of need identified for individual students.

Report annually on the progress made in implementing the recommendations adopted in the report.

Recommendations for Legislative Action

Allow the Texas Education Agency and the coordinating board to share student data to allow for tracking the in-state and out-of-state post-secondary enrollment of Texas public school students to help assess the impact of the appeals court *Hopwood* decision and the effects of using alternative criteria for admission and financial aid.

Revise the Equal Educational Opportunity formula to provide financial incentives for enrolling students from underserved populations.

Provide additional needs-based financial aid to students who are admitted, including allocating special state financial aid to students allocated less than 90 percent from other sources.

Recommendations for Colleges and Public Schools

Eliminate tracking procedures and other practices that limit opportunities of minority and underserved students in public schools.

Design college preparatory courses and programmatic experiences to benefit minority and underserved students. Eliminate terms such as *remedial education*. Start support programs early and continue them through the early years of post-secondary education. Ensure that courses and programs are culturally relevant.

Recommendations for Institutional Action

Establish criteria for admission and then select students from the eligible pool by lottery.

Require that institutions proposing to use criteria for greater access of underserved populations to provide empirical evidence that the proposed criteria will actually maintain or increase access for disadvantaged groups.

Ensure that teachers and professors acknowledge the history and culture of racial and ethnic minority students in all efforts, including curriculum. Give high priority to minority faculty, faculty development and transculturation activities for all staff members and administrators.

Provide development opportunities so that teachers and professors recognize that the family, the leadership structure and African American and Mexican American communities and other underrepresented minorities must be involved in the education of minority students.

Devise continuous outreach and recruitment efforts targeting underserved populations.

Make fully available to racial and ethnic minority and underserved populations financial resources, academic support services and student advisement, and career counseling programs.

Foster a welcoming environment for all students. Allow the operation of offices for multicultural affairs, centers for cultural studies, and minority-focused groups and associations. Support adequate funding levels for such offices.

Provide economic incentives to colleges and universities and special incentives for community-based organizations and minority-based associations to promote achieving a diverse student body that reflects Texas population trends.

Make needs of non-traditional students the priority in designing new instructional programs and schedules. Provide such students financial aid and support.

Develop initiatives, compile strategic plans, assess and monitor changes on campuses to ensure cultural diversity, including monitoring progress related to designated timetables and specific measurable results.

Organize conferences and seminars to focus on issues of diversity.

Advisory Committee on Criteria for Diversity, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 1997

Fourth Annual IDRA

La Semana del Niño

The Week of the Young Child

Early Childhood Educator's Institute™

April 21 through April 24, 1997
Omni San Antonio Hotel • San Antonio, Texas
Presented by: Intercultural Development Research Association

Explore new skills and insights through exciting sessions featuring early childhood experts and field trips showcasing innovative programs for the youngest of diverse learners. This professional development event, open to early childhood educators, administrators and parents, promises to be an informative, interesting and fun-filled experience.

Statewide Videoconference

In addition to the institute in San Antonio, educators and administrators from across the state will come together through special sessions on early childhood education methods and practices via a statewide videoconference. Its theme is "Critical Early Childhood Issues for the Year 2000 and Beyond: Supporting Families and Children Through Excellence," and it will be held on Wednesday afternoon, 2:00 to 4:00 CST. Contact Yojani Hernández at IDRA for details, 210/684-8180.

This year's theme is windows (Weaving Innovative Notions and Diverse Opportunities for Wee Scholars). Come and open new windows to the following areas:

- ✔ **Children's literature,** with an emphasis on diversity
- ✔ **School restructuring,** considering strategies that have been proven to improve literacy
- ✔ **Instructional strategies** in mathematics, science, play and technology
- ✔ **Parental involvement,** with sessions designed for parents and parent liaisons at the campus or district levels

An Evening With Gary Soto

Join us for a special reception on Monday evening with Gary Soto, renowned author of numerous books and poetry collections. Soto is perhaps best known among early childhood education circles for his book, *Too Many Tamales*. Together, his books for adults and young people have sold more than one million copies. In addition to speaking at the reception, Soto will be available Monday evening for book signing and will lead a workshop Tuesday morning.

- Meet well-known personalities in the area of children's literature who write about the experiences of diverse children.
- Learn the latest about restructuring in early childhood classrooms, such as multi-age settings, cross-age tutoring and dual language programs for the very young.
- Take home activities you've practiced through hands-on sessions in play, fine arts, technology, mathematics and science with a variety of practitioners and IDRA's very own experts in these fields.
- Visit nationally recognized early childhood centers to see innovative child-centered activities that are successful.
- Find out what's new in parent involvement either through sessions designed for parents by parents or for parent liaisons responsible for building capacity, writing parent-campus compacts and enhancing overall parent participation at the district level.
- Take home a notebook full of ideas to use right away in your classroom.
- Become part of an early childhood education network to focus on issues facing the youngest of diverse learners.

$150 (or $130 per team member) before March 27 • $175 after March 27 • $75 single day • $35 reception only

Sponsored by the Intercultural Development Research Association. Supporting IDRA projects include the Desegregation Assistance Center - South Central Collaborative and the STAR Center (the comprehensive regional assistance center that serves Texas via a collaboration of IDRA, the Dana Center at UT Austin and RMC Research Corporation). Each of these IDRA projects provides specialized training and technical assistance to public schools. Information on how your campus can use these resources to improve instruction and assessment will be available at the institute and may also be obtained by calling IDRA at 210/684-8180. Additional support has been provided by AVANCE and Parent-Child, Inc. Teams must have at least three members.

For more information or a registration brochure contact Hilaria Bauer or Carol Chavez at IDRA, 210/684-8180. E-mail: idra@idra.org

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Equity and Excellence:
Current Issues in the 75th Texas Legislative Session

Albert Cortez, Ph.D. and Anna Alicia Romero

In January, the Texas legislature began its 75th biennial session. State lawmakers will attempt to deal with an array of issues ranging from highway funding to welfare reform. While all of the issues that will be addressed are important, IDRA believes that no issue is more critical to the well-being of Texas than public education.

Between 1970 and 1994, Texas was the fastest growing state in the country, with a population growth of almost 40 percent (Center for Demographic and Socio-economic Research and Education, 1996). Though much of the state's growth resulted from in-migration by adults, a significant portion of the new residents were children – either new additions to Texas families or school-age youths who migrated to Texas with their parents.

The Center for Demographic and Socioeconomic Research and Education estimates that roughly 51,000 additional students will enroll in Texas schools each year from 1990 through the year 2030 (1996). IDRA will focus its state policy monitoring efforts on specific issues that affect critical sub-groups of children in Texas. These policy focal areas are discussed below.

School Finance Equity

In 1995, the Texas Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Texas public school finance system. The ruling was based on projections of educational funding proposed under Senate Bill 7, adopted by the 1993 Texas legislature. While the state has made some strides in narrowing the gap in spending – particularly in the early 1990s, its most recent efforts have served to *maintain*, rather than *reduce* the gaps in funding equity created by the state funding system.

Two years after the court ruling, research conducted by IDRA on the status of the funding system indicates that there are significant differences in funds available to educate children in the state's wealthiest and poorest school systems. Even at similar levels of tax effort, school districts can have up to a $374,040 difference in the amount of money available to educate children.

In spite of continuing disparities, many people contend that the system is equal enough, and others would say that the state went too far and would propose changes to the court-approved plan.

Proposals that have been mentioned in policy deliberations include (a) increasing the basic allotment, which is the fundamental building block of the Texas public school funding system; (b) changing the manner in which compensatory, bilingual education, gifted and talented, and migrant education programs are funded; (c) modifying the state's funding formula for small and sparse school systems; and (d) altering funding levels for transportation allotments.

Even as the gap in program funding remains constant, the state has done little to reduce the gross inequalities in funding for school facilities prevalent in Texas school systems. In 1991, the state subsidized a research project to assess the extent of local public school facilities' needs in Texas. The study determined that hundreds of school buildings in the state were in need of major repair or replacement (Texas Education Agency, 1992). Rather than creating a comprehensive solution, the legislature opted for band-aid approaches that provided "emergency facilities funding" for school systems in most critical need.

In the interim, many schools continue to face overcrowding due to enrollment growth, and others struggle to maintain outdated facilities. Additionally, local property taxpayers continue to shoulder unequal burdens associated with local unequalized facilities funding expenses. While no new proposals for funding facilities have yet surfaced, a group of fast-growing districts has recently organized to promote their unique issues, including the creation of a state plan for equalized funding of school facilities.

In a policy research effort conducted by the staff of the Legislative Budget Board, staff members chose to forego conducting research on the current condition of local school facilities, citing limits in funding as the justification for ignoring this critical issue. Even in the absence of more recent data, existing evidence points to a critical need for a comprehensive state initiative to address this long-neglected aspect of local public school funding. Continued state inaction invites a new court challenge modeled after the original *Edgewood* lawsuit, with facilities funding serving as the major focus.

IDRA will evaluate proposals relating to school finance on the basis of the following principles:

- The plan should have a positive impact on the level of school finance equity created by the existing funding system.
- The plan should not result in a decrease in funding levels for low wealth school systems.
- Proposed changes in special program weights should not diminish the resources available to educate students and adequately address each of their unique characteristics.
- The provision must be made for state participation in facilities funding.
- Facilities funding provisions should make a separate allocation for facilities, rather than forcing school districts to choose between using Tier II funding for programs or for facilities.

Property Tax Relief

An increase in the tax rates charged by many school districts was caused by major changes incorporated into recent school finance reform in Texas. One change involved the recognition of higher local tax effort at Tier II of the state funding system (the portion referred to as *guaranteed yield*) and the provision of additional state aid in proportion to that higher tax effort. Because districts were able to generate significantly more money for this higher effort, many took advantage of this option, and local district tax rates rose across the state.

A second change raised the minimum tax effort required of all districts in the state. As a result, many high wealth school districts were forced to raise what had been relatively low tax rates to levels more comparable to those charged in average wealth school systems. This combination of increased local tax efforts in high wealth districts and incentives for higher local school taxes in low and average wealth school systems resulted in notably higher school taxes in all parts of the state. While above average tax rates had long been the norm in property poor districts (even before the latest state funding reforms), the increase in tax rates in

***Equity and Excellence** - continued on page 8*

Equity and Excellence - continued from page 7

above average and wealthy school systems attracted the attention of influential political leaders who have now chosen to make "property tax relief" their goal for the 1997 session.

To assess the public perspectives on the issue, an interim legislative committee conducted hearings and submitted its report to the legislature. Committee recommendations included a reduction in local school property tax rates and a replacement of this revenue with alternative revenue sources that could include, but were not limited to, an increase in the state sales tax, a corporate profits tax or a value added tax (Citizens' Committee, 1996). Preliminary recommendations were incorporated into a proposal that has been drafted for consideration by the upcoming legislature.

IDRA will monitor these proposals to assess (a) the extent to which current and historical tax efforts are considered in any tax relief proposals and (b) the impact of proposed school tax reductions on local school revenues, focusing specifically on the impact of any tax "relief" on the extent of finance equity in the state's public school funding system. IDRA will evaluate property tax relief proposals on the basis of the following principles:

- The plan should recognize and make provisions for current and historical above average tax rates and districts' property wealth per pupil.
- Alternative tax proposals need to be more progressive than the current school property tax approach (i.e., do not require lower income persons to pay out a higher percentage of their income).
- Alternative tax options must be as stable a revenue source for education as the local property taxes.

Public Funding for Private Schools

A movement supported by small but influential interests distributed throughout the state is continuing to call for public funds to be used for the education of students who are enrolled in private schools. Public funds are being used to finance public "charter schools." These schools are specific in their mission and have limited enrollment but must loosely comply with the standards for all public schools in the state. The governor and a small group of legislators are strong proponents of both concepts. The 74th legislature passed laws allowing for the creation of 20 charter schools, though it eventually rejected the concept of providing state funding for private schooling.

Proponents may once again attempt to secure state support through vouchers or so-called "choice" programs. Proponents of charter schools will push for an increase in the number of charter schools that are eligible to receive state funding.

IDRA will evaluate proposals for using public monies to support private schooling and will assess the following:

- the extent to which the "choice" plan ensures that all students (rather than schools) have equitable access to the schools of their choice; and
- the extent to which proposed alternatives are required to comply with federal and state requirements related to non-discrimination and provision of equal educational opportunity for all students.

IDRA will also assess charter school proposals regarding the extent to which they are accessible to all students served in public schools and the potential contribution that such alternatives can make to improving instruction for all students in public schools.

State Language Policy

Recent attention to language-related policies stemming from the last federal congressional session will likely be raised at the state level. Nationally, efforts to cut funds for bilingual education and to make English the official U.S. language were among a myriad of heated issues with adverse repercussions for non-English speaking residents of this country. It is possible that legislation will be proposed to reduce funding for bilingual education in Texas or to modify current state law relating to the education of limited-English-proficient (LEP) pupils. Certification of bilingual education teachers may also be addressed, after the much publicized problems with the certification process in California and Texas and with recent reports citing the need for more bilingual teachers.

Texas enrolls the second largest number of children who speak a language other than English. In 1996, a total of 479,576 Texas pupils were identified as being limited-English-proficient. Of the total, only 240,538 were enrolled in a bilingual education program. Some critics of bilingual education propose to limit the amount of time students can participate in a bilingual education program, while others would eliminate the programs altogether.

Federal requirements specify that schools must address the language-related needs of their students and that simply providing an all-English instructional program does not provide equal access to

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education for such children.

Critics of bilingual education are often misinformed about its purpose and operation. Others simply oppose the idea of teaching in a child's first language, despite much research evidence that supports bilingual education as the most effective way to ensure students' academic progress while at the same time learning English (Cárdenas, 1995).

As the number of LEP students enrolled in Texas schools increases along with the general population, so will the need for well-prepared teachers. Recent research, however, indicates that the state still lags far behind others in supplying the numbers of bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) teachers needed. A recent Texas study found that in 1996 almost one of every three teachers working in these programs was not certified to teach in that specialty area (Gold, 1997). Special programs that provide new incentives for teacher education candidates to consider bilingual or ESL specializations may be proposed.

Related to the issue of language policy is the attempt to make English the official language of the United States. Throughout the country, there are factions of advocates who support a monolingual society. The English Only movement uses several arguments. These arguments include the view that the common language and culture of the nation is in jeopardy due to the multilingual population and the language needs of recently immigrated residents and citizens. Other English Only proponents argue that, since English is already the dominant language, it is only logical to have the government "declare" it the official language for U.S. citizens. Warnings that the movement to secede Quebec from Canada could happen similarly in the United States are often used by English Only groups to portray non-English speaking immigrants as a threat to this county.

But many other people realize that there is a great benefit to not restricting fluency in more than one language. This is especially true in Texas, a major player in the free trade occurring between the United States and Latin American countries. Governor George Bush, Jr., has publicly spoken out against adopting English as the official language stating:

> *English plus* recognizes the important richness that other languages and cultures bring to our nation of immigrants...As the world becomes smaller and trade between countries becomes freer, the ability to speak several languages will be an important plus for our citizens (Bush, 1996).

IDRA's concern also revolves around the impact of language on effective learning for students and the need for effective communication between the school and the child's guardian. Any bills that would affect the transitioning of non-English speaking students into English should consider the following principles:

- Programs must foster learning for children whose primary language is other than English.
- Language policies must not arbitrarily limit the extent to which students are permitted to maintain a language other than English.
- The language policies must not arbitrarily restrict or limit a person's opportunity to function in more than one language.

Access to Public Education for Immigrant Students

Another controversial issue debated during the 104th U.S. Congress was the education of immigrant students in public schools. A measure was considered that would allow states the option of turning away children of undocumented workers from public schools and virtually would turn teachers into INS agents by having to verify students' citizenship status. Proponents of the bill heralded it as a money-saver for taxpayers. They overlooked the impact such a measure would have on children who have no control over their citizenship. The constitutionality of such a proposal is also questionable (see Cortez and Romero, 1996).

If Texas legislators attempt to adopt restrictive admission policies in our public schools, they must be reminded of the U.S. Supreme Court opinion in 1981, *Plylar vs. Doe*. According to that landmark ruling that challenged Texas' exclusionary policies, no child can be denied a public education based on the citizenship status of his or her parents.

The debate in Texas might assume a different tone because the current political leadership has made public statements against denying children, regardless of citizenship status, the opportunity to receive an education.

In the long run, making education inaccessible to children of undocumented workers would likely increase the cost to taxpayers due to the need for citizenship verification. It would likely also increase illiteracy rates and lower employment rates for children left without an education and without career prospects for the future. Various religious, civil rights, education and law enforcement groups have spoken out against measures to turn children away from our public schools.

Despite such opposition, there are those who would deny children access to a basic education or would impose requirements designed to actively discourage immigrant parents from enrolling their children in school.

IDRA will assess immigrant education proposals based on the following principles:

- Any proposed legislation must re-affirm all children's right to an education.
- Request for supplemental funding to offset the impact of immigrant pupil enrollment, which may require identification of such pupils, must ensure no chilling effect on immigrant student enrollment.
- If supplemental funding is allocated, it must target the unique needs of immigrant students (i.e., students transitioning to U.S. culture), and it must consider the impact of immigrant students on local facility needs.

Access to Higher Education

The *Hopwood vs. The State of Texas* case (coupled with the highly publicized passage of California's Proposition 209 that did away with state affirmative action policies) will undoubtedly bring forward the issue of minority access to higher education during the upcoming state legislative session.

In the *Hopwood* case, four Anglo plaintiffs filed a suit against the University of Texas Law School on the basis that the school had in place a "discriminatory" admission process at the time that the plaintiffs applied for admission. The federal appeals court struck down the admission policy and, later, the U.S. Supreme Court chose not to hear the case (see Kauffman, 1996). Some critics of the appeals court decision have expressed concern about its impact on affirmative action, particularly related to the stated commitment to diversity expressed by most state-funded institutions. While some schools will propose policies to support the achievement of student diversity in Texas higher education, others will attempt to codify the *Hopwood* ruling to restrict efforts to implement affirmative recruitment and admission policies in state institutions.

Principles that IDRA will use to guide

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assessment of access to higher education include the following:

- Proposed changes in an institution's admission or financial aid policies must support inclusion, not exclusion, as the means to increase student diversity.
- Proposed policies must encourage consideration of multiple factors for admission and financial aid.
- Proposed student recruitment policies should be accompanied by commensurate emphases on strategies that promote retention and graduation.
- Ultimate accountability should rest with the institutions of higher education and should include quantitative measures of success.

Alternative Educational Placements

Responding to increased concerns about teachers' abilities to maintain control over their students and about the high numbers of school expulsions, the 74th legislature adopted policies requiring local school districts to establish "alternative educational placements" for students considered disruptive in conventional school settings. Though well intended by some, data compiled by the state education agency has found that the number of students being referred to those settings has been increasing.

Critics of these programs have cited concerns about the new limits on students' *due process* rights and have questioned the legality of requiring minimal curricular or staff certification offerings in these alternative settings, thus setting up student tracking situations in many schools. Some once-supportive lawmakers have begun to question the operation of these alternative programs. Others have taken note of the absence of much needed data about who gets assigned and what happens to students who are tracked into these alternative placements. IDRA will monitor proposals relating to alternative placements using the following guiding principles:

- Proposed alternative education policies must improve the quality of education for students referred to such programs.
- Changes in data collected must contribute toward better profiling of student referrals to such settings and, adequate procedures should be in place for reporting such data to the Texas Education Agency and the local community.
- The curricular offering should facilitate student graduation not encourage student in-grade retention.
- Proposed changes must create or enhance provisions for re-entry into the regular campus after completing referral to the alternative setting.
- Policies must increase access to data relating to the impact or effectiveness of alternative educational settings on students referred to such programs.
- Costs associated with creating and maintaining alternative educational settings should be computed and compared to other options.

School Accountability

A recent *Education Week* study of state education policies gave Texas a grade of "A" for its comprehensive student and school accountability system (Ramos, 1997). While many are pleased with the current situation, others would modify existing state policies in numerous accountability-related areas. One concern is the number of students that may be exempted from the state testing program and its implications on the comprehensiveness and accuracy of school accountability ratings (Texas Education Agency, 1996). Another complaint is about the use of student "sun-group" data in the assignment of ratings of school district performance on the AIS indicator system. Some feel that the state requires too much standardized student testing, while others feel it does not require enough. IDRA will continue to monitor proposed policy changes that impact the accountability system. Principles that will be used to guide our analysis include the following:

- The proposed policy changes should make the schools more accountable for producing acceptable student outcomes.
- Proposed changes should contribute to improving the amount or quality of information available to guide instructional improvement.
- The policy changes must allow for improving the alignment between curriculum, instruction and assessment practices.
- Changes in analyses or reporting should contribute to increased public understanding of school performance.

IDRA believes that the issues outlined above are among the most critical facing the Texas legislature. IDRA staff members will monitor development in each area and provide information and technical assistance to those involved in the policy-making process. Future issues of the *IDRA Newsletter* will report on the outcomes in the organization's major focus areas.

Upcoming Event

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Resources

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Dr. Albert Cortez is the director of the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership. Anna Alicia Romero is an education assistant in the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership. Comments and questions may be sent to them via E-mail at acortez@idra.org.

REFLECTIONS

Dr. José A. Cárdenas

THE ANALOGY OF THE AMOEBA

I have been a professional educator since 1950, when I received my bachelor's degree from the University of Texas and a teaching certificate from the state. During these years my strongest commitment has been to the children involved in the educational process. My second strongest commitment has been to the adaptation of educational practice to the characteristics of different types of children.

I do not consider a commitment to children as being a prime consideration of the schools. Although there certainly is a pervasive dedication to children by most educational personnel, this dedication is often debilitated by a conflicting commitment to self, to the profession and to the educational system.

The commitment to adaptability in the educational system has been late in coming and weak in intensity. It has always been preferable to expect children to adapt to uniform materials and methodologies than to develop a pluralistic curriculum that adapts to the unique characteristics of groups of students and to individuals with a diverse background in culture, language, socio-economic status and lifestyle. Thus, schools have traditionally communicated with students in a language that the students cannot understand and presented instruction that is culturally irrelevant at best, and culturally contradictory and psychologically damaging at worst.

Looking back at my experiences as an educator, I can't help but note that I didn't always have a sensitivity to the differing characteristics of children, nor a strong commitment to the adaptation of educational practice. It wasn't until my seventeenth year as an educator that, like St. Paul, I was struck down on the road to Damascus and arose with a different perspective on the education of atypical children. This perspective was to have a strong influence on my professional role for the remainder of my life.

The incidence that triggered my conversion was a conversation with a cultural anthropologist in which he mentioned some interesting experiments with low forms of animal life. In order to put across some minor point that I have since forgotten, the anthropologist mentioned that using different colors and intensities of light, even an amoeba could be trained in a laboratory to differentiate between letters of the alphabet. Having spent 17 years as a teacher and administrator, and having spent 17 years dealing with the frustration of attempting to teach reading to students who could not differentiate between letters of the alphabet, I was stunned by the capability of these microbiologists.

Long after this revelation took place, I contemplated the educational implications of this bit of information. I eventually concluded that the success experienced in teaching amoebas in the laboratory was attributed to the unique adaptation of the instructional process to the characteristics of the amoeba. Scientists in the laboratory created a special instructional environment for the amoeba, including microscopic versions of the letters to be presented.

The importance of this adaptation was realized when I speculated on what would happen if instead of teaching letters of the alphabet to amoebas in the laboratory, the scientists would have simply sent the amoebas to a school where there were experts in the teaching of reading and reading readiness skills. I speculated that the student amoebas would have been placed in a regular classroom, assigned to a regular seat and given a regular reading textbook.

The size of the textbook would have precluded the amoeba traveling the length of one page in a lifetime, and the attempt to educate the amoeba would have ended in frustration and failure.

Following this frustration and failure, the unsuccessful school would inevitably rationalize its failure by attributing it to the victim

- The amoeba did poorly in school because it had a limited knowledge of the English language.
- The amoeba came from the wrong side of the pond where education is not seen as a vehicle for upward mobility.
- The amoeba came from a foreign culture that does not value education.
- The amoeba's parents did not cooperate in the education of their offspring.
- Amoebas have lost their family values.
- The amoebas were obviously female since they were more interested in mitosis than in schooling.
- Amoebas have a poor sense of deferred gratification. They would rather party and have fun now, than work and sacrifice now to attain future benefits.

The list could be expanded, but it is not necessary to do so. The salient point is that a failure to adapt instructional programs to the unique characteristics of students accounts for their poor performance in school. The victim of inappropriate schooling is then blamed for the poor performance.

José A. Cárdenas, Ed.D., is the director emeritus and founder of IDRA. Comments and questions may be sent to him via E-mail at idra@idra.org. *Reprinted with permission from* All Pianos Have Keys and Other Stories, *1994. (Available from IDRA. To order send check or purchase order for $12.70 to IDRA, 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, Texas 78228; fax 210/684-5389.)*

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levels of performance and learning by *all* students. Because school systems today have highly diverse student populations with diverse learning needs, a challenge schools face is to deliver instructional services so that all students eventually meet the high standards. Students with limited English proficiency (LEP) are a particular group to whom schools in Texas teach to high standards. How to do this in an equitable manner requires creative strategies in planning and teaching (see Gonzales, 1995). But prior to that are the adjustments of school personnel mindsets.

In 1993, a group of educators, convened as the Stanford Working Group, examined the specific challenge of how to include LEP students in the reform proposals of the 1990s. The group made some specific recommendations for states to consider as they move toward setting and using high standards. The findings and suggestions can be useful tools for educators as they chart the path for success for these students. Below are a few of the insights that merit some thought:

- The educator mindset about LEP students – that their native language and culture are obstacles to achievement – is a major inhibitor to the educator's effort to include LEP students when teaching to high standards. Research soundly shows the failure of this "deficit model."
- Research, in fact, demonstrates that all children can and do engage in complex thinking tasks. Thus, researchers now hold that the potential to achieve high levels of cognitive functioning is a property of the human species and therefore accessible to all children.
- Accessibility to high levels of cognitive functioning can only be provided through high quality instruction and a challenging curriculum.
- "Dumbing-down" the curriculum for disadvantaged children represents an insupportable denial of educational opportunity because there are examples (that many educators can access) of what can happen when students are provided the opportunity and expectations to achieve high levels of learning (Stanford Working Group, 1993).

Bilingual TEKS Over Texas

As mentioned before, the Texas Education Agency is in the midst of a major rewriting of the state-required curriculum for math, science, social studies, English language arts and a variety of other courses. The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) will replace the "Essential Elements" as guidelines for instruction for kindergarten through 12th grade and will have major effects on public education at the local, state and national levels.

AN IMPORTANT ISSUE FOCUSES ON WHETHER OR NOT THE TEKS WILL BE ABLE TO HELP TEACHERS MEET THE NEEDS OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS WITHOUT PUNISHING THEM FOR PREVIOUS EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT OR FOR THEIR LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY.

An important issue focuses on whether or not the TEKS will be able to help teachers meet the needs of second language learners without punishing them for previous educational neglect or for their linguistic and cultural diversity.

Textbook publishers, state-mandated test designers and teacher preparation programs will be required to align their content with the TEKS. It has often been said that, "As goes Texas, so goes the nation." Because the Texas textbook market is so large, the TEKS will also affect the textbooks, tests and instruction of other states. At the local level, schools will be held accountable for ensuring that *all* students, including second language learners, have access to TEKS-aligned curricula and instruction.

This change has been long overdue. The Essential Elements standards represented a significant advance over previous attempts to specify curricular standards at the state and local levels, but educators agreed that they were often vague, were hard to measure and had not kept up with recent advances in the field, especially in light of the content and performance standards being developed at the national level (e.g., National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1991; American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1993; National Center on Education and the Economy, 1995; International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English, 1996; National Research Council, 1996; Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, in development). Business and community leaders and professional educators also made it clear that the Essential Elements standards could not adequately prepare students for the demands of the 21st century workplace or responsible U.S. citizenship.

The TEKS guidelines are much longer than the Essential Elements. Currently at 2,000 pages, the State Board of Education has requested changes that will require the document to grow even longer. As one would expect, much of the expansion, as compared to the Essential Elements, can be traced to an increase in expectations for student knowledge and performance in all content areas. Greater emphases on problem solving, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and inquiry are evident. These changes are greatly needed if we are to prepare students adequately for tomorrow.

Yet, can teachers increase their expectations for second language learners to meet those they hold for students whose primary language is English? Will attempts to do so inevitably lead to frustration, anger and defeat for second language learners and their teachers?

"Yes," answers the first question, and "No" answers the second, provided that school districts, the Texas Education Agency and teacher education programs all accomplish their share of necessary changes. First, there must be a statewide policy that recognizes the contributions of native language development to English language development and content area knowledge. Second, there must be an expansion of the TEKS to specify modifications of the expectations for second language learners. Third, there must be an increase in genuine support for effective teaching practices for second language learners (see Villarreal, 1996).

One of the "basic understandings" for the TEKS in English language arts acknowledges that primary language knowledge and skills can contribute to second language learning:

> For students whose first language is other than English, the native language may be needed as a foundation for English language acquisition and literacy learning, (Texas Education Agency, July 1996).

Bilingual educators throughout the state should rejoice that the statement will be read by all elementary and secondary teachers who teach reading or English whether or not they have bilingual education

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or ESL students. It recognizes that *all* teachers, not just bilingual/ESL teachers, are accountable for the English language acquisition of language minority students.

On the other hand, the statement equivocates by stating that "the native language *may be needed* as a foundation" rather than simply stating, "the native language *is* the foundation." Pronouncing this simple linguistic truth, that the child's first language is the building block on which his or her learning of English will be built, does not imply that all teachers will be required to teach in the child's native language. Besides being impossible for monolingual English-speaking teachers to acquire enough knowledge of another language without years of study, it is both more effective and more efficient for bilingual teachers to handle this part of the bilingual program. It does mean, however, that even monolingual teachers need to understand the contributions of primary language to second language development and to take advantage of those contributions whenever possible.

Despite the ambivalence of this statement in the English language arts TEKS, it is highly preferable to the absence of any such statement in the TEKS for math, science and social studies. Of special significance is the content area TEKS for secondary students. Because current state law only requires bilingual programs for kindergarten through sixth grade students, only a very few middle or high schools in the state provide content area or literacy development courses in languages other than English, even when they have large numbers of recent immigrant students, many of whom received little or no schooling in their countries of origin. A recognition in the TEKS that math, science and social studies can be learned as well in Spanish or other languages as in English could help secondary schools understand that such an approach could accelerate their students' academic achievement over an ESL-only approach.

An expansion of the TEKS, especially the English language arts TEKS, is also in order to specify how (if at all) expectations for second language learners should differ from expectations for native English speakers. However, it may prove very complex to accomplish. One major issue is that not all second language learners are alike. Some are at the initial stages of learning English; others can hardly be distinguished from native speakers in their command of the language. Some are expert readers and writers in their native languages; others have never held a pencil or a book. Some have mastered advanced concepts and skills in math, science and social studies in their native languages; others have never been to school. Some speak languages, such as Spanish, for which instructional materials and native speakers are easily available; others speak languages of which their teachers have never heard. Expectations for these subgroups of second language learners must also be addressed.

At the very least, it needs to be clear which performance descriptors apply to beginners or novices, which to intermediate proficiency level students and which to advanced level students. For example, should fourth grade beginners study outlining or word origins, evaluate the uses of propaganda or employ standard English usage in polished formal writing? If not, at which proficiency level or grade should they be introduced to these skills and topics?

A clear understanding of the difference between *content* and *form* could help. We know that a lack of English proficiency does not mean a lack of intelligence. Second language learners are as intellectually capable as anyone else of understanding complex concepts and relationships. When cognitively complex ideas are expressed in linguistically complex ways, however, second language learners may stumble and fall. And when they do comprehend the new information, they may not be able to express their understanding, again because linguistic

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Community Leadership for Standards-Based Reform

The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) is working with community organizations in Corpus Christi to support its middle schools' efforts to be more effective. Corpus Christi's schools have taken on an initiative of "standards-based reform" to set clear standards for learning and to support teachers in helping students achieve those standards.

Participating schools, community organizations and IDRA are forming a partnership to create a *concerted effort* that will result in the design, initiation and evaluation of successful family involvement strategies. IDRA is serving as a catalyst, facilitator and source of information for community-based organizations and participating schools. The community organizations will become the natural and important conduits for informing families on standards-based school reform and in involving families in the school reform activities. The schools will become the principal partners with the organizations in conducting outreach and informing parents about school reform.

This initiative is funded by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation which has a much respected history of supporting education and championing school reform through the development of high standards.

IDRA is leading five major activities:

- initial needs assessment and planning with community organizations and school representatives;
- school-community planning sessions on conducting outreach to families;
- leadership training for community organizations;
- focus groups in which parents interview other parents; and
- community forum for parents designed by parents.

As a result of this effort, family outreach systems will be created at the participating schools and community-based organizations. These systems will be consistent with effective change strategies and will address the challenges of a standards-based reform effort in a multi-ethnic community. Schools and organizations will have staff specifically trained in family involvement in the standards-based reform effort implemented in the Corpus Christi schools. Also, stronger coordination will exist among community organizations in their efforts to involve parents in the standards-based school reform initiative. Schools and community organizations will improve planning and implementation of family outreach strategies and evaluating the effectiveness of a coordinated effort.

For more information contact Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed., (amontmyr@idra.org) or Rogelio López del Bosque, Ed.D., (rlopez@idra.org) at IDRA (210/684-8180).

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complexity is required by the teacher in his or her assessment of the student's knowledge. When teachers realize that new concepts (content) can be explained in alternative ways (form), such as reducing linguistic complexity and enriching classroom context, they will be well on their way to helping second language learners acquire the same knowledge and skills as other students without requiring them to demonstrate mastery in inappropriate and ineffective ways.

Students who are not literate in any language will also need special consideration. It seems obvious that prerequisite skills such as left-to-right directionality, sound-symbol correspondences and the mechanics of letter formation will need to be taught directly to students who are preliterate. Beginning reading and writing skills are addressed in the TEKS for kindergarten through third grade, but not for fourth through 12th grade. Even students who do have native language literacy may need to be taught some of these skills because their language's written systems differ from that of English. Ideographic languages such as Japanese do not follow the alphabetic principle. Second language learners from Japan and other Asian countries will need to learn how letters, sounds and words work together in English. Other languages do not follow left-to-right conventions, and all will have phonological systems different from English. These differences should be targeted when initially teaching students in any grade to read and write in English.

On the other hand, students who do have some native language literacy will be able to transfer many skills to their English literacy development. They will not need to be retaught all of the beginning reading and writing skills. For example, most of the Spanish consonants are identical or very close to the English consonants. Phonics instruction for Spanish readers should focus on the vowels and on those consonants such as *v* and *z*, that have different sounds in English and Spanish. Many bilingual/ESL teachers are aware of such contrasting analyses of different languages, but others are not. Including such information in the English language arts TEKS could help us address this.

Once the TEKS have been revised and expanded, support of effective teaching practices will become critical. State law requires that the TEKS update the state curriculum without restricting local flexibility and control. They are designed to specify *what* to teach, but not *how* to teach. Local school districts will continue to decide which methods and materials to use to meet the needs of their students.

All of the challenges associated with the teaching of second language learners cannot, as a result, be fully addressed in the TEKS. The Texas Education Agency, the regional education service centers and other training and technical assistance providers such as the STAR Center will need to assist school districts in taking the TEKS and making them their own. Plans for written classroom vignettes to describe how the TEKS can be implemented at different grade levels, staff development materials and training videos will be developed and disseminated to help.

It will also be important that steps be taken to ensure that the curriculum is aligned with assessment. The state assessment system will need to be modified to include appropriate assessment of LEP students. For example, a recent state agency report to the 75th Texas legislature calls for alternative assessment of LEP students who are exempted from the English-language TAAS (Texas Education Agency, 1996).

A statewide committee, under the direction of the bilingual education department of the Texas Education Agency, has begun meeting to develop TEKS for ESL in kindergarten through 12th grade and for Spanish language arts in kindergarten through sixth grade. Meanwhile, the current draft of TEKS for English language arts, math, science and social studies continues to be reviewed by the State Board of Education and may well change before the final adoption scheduled for July 1997. There is still time for bilingual/ESL and other educators to provide input into revisions of and additions to the TEKS.

Requests can also be made that staff development materials for regular and bilingual/ESL teachers on the ESL and Spanish language arts TEKS be developed. A great opportunity to improve the education of second language learners is before us, if we will only take the time to apply our professionalism and our expertise to state policy-making.

For more information or a copy of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), contact the Texas Education Agency or your education service center. The TEKS are also available on-line at: www.tenet.edu.

Resources

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Dr. Laura Chris Green is an education associate in the IDRA Division of Professional Development. Dr. Adela Solis is a senior education associate in the IDRA Division of Professional Development. Comments and questions may be sent to them via E-mail at cgreen@idra.org and asolis@idra.org respectively.

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from underserved populations and would also result in 50 percent more minority group members considered eligible.

Even though the use of certain factors would significantly increase the total number of students who might be deemed eligible, the report noted that simply increasing the pool of eligible students would not ensure the greater inclusion of minority students. This is because minorities constitute different proportions of the population in specific categories. For this reason, the choice of which of the 10 or 15 criteria to use will require consideration of factors that increase the numbers of persons considered eligible *and* that include sizable concentrations of minority and low-income populations within their totals.

Conclusions

The advisory committee's report presents the following eight conclusions:

- While numerous criteria may be useful in identifying segments of the population in need, no single criterion will result in the same level of inclusion achieved prior to *Hopwood*.
- Historically, the state of Texas has not effectively implemented public policy designed to achieve diversity.
- Citizens of the state of Texas do not fully appreciate implications of changing demographics, and they go beyond resisting facts to ignoring or procrastinating in developing solutions.
- Institutions using selective admissions have been perceived as inhospitable to minorities, possibly decreasing minority applications to those institutions.
- Use of standardized tests unduly limits admissions and has a chilling effect on motivations and aspirations of underserved populations, and the tests should be used as only one part of any selection process.
- Concerns related to access are often limited to focusing on admissions. Full access must include developing goals (and data) related to student retention and graduation.
- Full access transcends merely expanding admissions criteria. It must also include making adequate financial resources available.
- Unless the socio-economic conditions of the state's minority populations change,

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HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT IDRA ACTIVITIES

In December, IDRA worked with **4,669** teachers, administrators and parents through **27** training and technical assistance activities and **103** program sites in **six** states plus the United Kingdom. Topics included:

- Selecting a Bilingual Education Model
- Parents as Tutors
- Spanish Literacy Curricular Materials and Software
- *Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program*
- Learning Styles

Participating agencies and school districts include:

- Austin ISD, Texas
- Corpus Christi ISD, Texas
- Los Angeles Department of Education
- Rogers Public Schools, Arkansas
- Ector County, Texas
- City of San Antonio

IDRA staff provides services to:

- public school teachers
- parents
- administrators
- other decision-makers in public education

Services include:

- training and technical assistance
- evaluation
- serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula.

Activity Snapshot

IDRA has been working with a school district in Louisiana that is responding to a U.S. Department of Justice citation regarding racial discrimination under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. After an in-depth investigation and needs assessment, IDRA's Desegregation Assistance Center made a series of recommendations to the board of education including the need to develop appropriate policy that prohibits racial discrimination and the creation of racially hostile environments. Also recommended was staff development for board members, central office staff and all principals and assistants throughout the parish. IDRA is providing this training and continued technical assistance.

For information on IDRA services for your school district or other group, contact IDRA at 210/684-8180.

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more remediation and financial assistance will be required.

The advisory committee closed its report with a series of recommendations sub-divided into four groups: (1) the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and areas in which they have jurisdiction, (2) legislative action the board should consider proposing, (3) institutional actions and (4) actions recommended for colleges and public grade schools. The specific recommendations are outlined in the box on Page 5. The 19-page report has been submitted to the THECB for its consideration and action.

The committee's recommendations are a significant improvement upon the generally more conventional policies used in many Texas colleges and universities. However, something is missing in the broad-ranging recommendations. There are no processes for holding colleges and universities accountable for producing the results.

In Texas, public schools for kindergarten through 12th grade are subjected to extensive scrutiny and are held accountable for achieving state prescribed targets in such areas as student achievement, attendance and dropout rates. The Texas public school accountability system includes stringent school rating and reporting requirements that make the accountability system among the most highly rated in the country. While improvements in student performance in some schools are attributable to the efforts of committed educators, the sanctions and accountability provisions no doubt provide additional incentives for schools to improve.

COMING UP!

In March, the *IDRA Newsletter* focuses on coordination of funds and programs.

Most college and university systems are not held to anything near that level of accountability. In Texas, as in most other states, higher education is minimally accountable. High attrition rates and lack of diversity in most state-supported institutions are blamed on others such as students, parents and grade schools.

IDRA believes that higher education institutions, like elementary and secondary schools, merit being held accountable to state developed targets related to inclusion and graduation. Development of that system should be inclusive and participatory, meaning that all key stakeholders should have an opportunity to provide input in the design of the system. Once it is designed and implemented, the next challenge will be to fend off attempts to dilute accountability by manipulating numbers or creating exceptions to reporting requirements, as has been the experience in the public school system.

Talk of accountability unfortunately makes many people who are vested in the higher education status quo extremely uncomfortable. The immediate reaction is to point to successes and emphasize all the reasons that heightened expectations may be perceived as unreasonable. The *Hopwood* case has had the unforeseen effect of causing many to look closely at the extent of exclusion that characterizes Texas higher education, and thus we have an unparalleled opportunity to revamp the system in ways that make access fair and equitable to all students. The recommendations made by the THECB's committee on diversity merit serious consideration by policy makers at all levels. IDRA will monitor developments in this critical area to see if the work and careful thinking reflected in the report are given due attention or if they are merely given lip service in a system committed to maintaining an unequal system of education.

Resources

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Dr. Albert Cortez is the director of the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership. Comments and questions may be sent to him via E-mail at acortez@idra.org.

INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT • RESEARCH ASSOCIATION IDRA

5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350
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